Never Stand Next To Tom

Carol asks me to open the drawer of the nightstand next to their bed and hand her the sharp-faceted crystal on a chain. It is about two inches in length and lies across the extended barrel of a loaded .45 revolver. Daylight embellishes the master bedroom's furniture with searing coronal glow. Her husband is at work crunching super secret mountains of data. A dog, something that shares the stature of a dachshund with floppy ears and long hair, runs up the specially constructed stairs at the foot of their bed and nestles itself between the pillows at head, staring out with snout resting against the quilt, accustomed to my presence by now and merely tagging along where the excitement and adventure takes it.

"Are you familiar with trance states?"

Smiling, I relate that I am an explorer, and spent most of my twentieth year in prison for possession of LSD. A graduate of Leary, McKenna, and Castaneda. She wants to divine my future, explaining that her chosen scrying methodology will require both of us to enter into a meditative state, which she will induce by employing the tinted transparent shard as a pendulum. Nodding, I ask her to give me a few minutes, listening to Aphex Twin's Ambient Works 85-92 album. This was about twenty-five years ago, and empeethree players were still very much a common item to be carried. The cellphone I carried for work was a walkie-talkie version made by Nextel that was a horrible box of alarm clocks with a tiny yellow screen. I enjoyed being at Carol's home in St. Hedwig not just for the company, she being my elderly neighbor's oldest sister - the prettiest and the smartest - but because it was nestled in a dead zone by my cell carrier. Nextel's service area was also limited by the technology of the era. A main thoroughfare lined on both sides with planned communities spanning four decades that our company frequently advertised specifically for also instituted radio silence. I noted during a climbing trip to Enchanted Rock in the Texas Hill Country that I had three bars at its acme, not a building or tower in sight in any direction.

[A memory intrudes. It has nothing to do with this narrative, but this is an autobiographical record....

Tammy Massey and I are driving. She asks me to find something on the radio. It is night. I tune to 91.7 KRTU. John Coltrane's My Favorite Things is playing and I tell her I have this CD. She listens and picks out the melody, which is readily apparent because the track has just begun.]

Carol swings the crystal as a pendulum in a '50s movie with a hypnotist. She tells me that Patty and I are to be wed, which is odd, seeing as how I am with one of her younger sisters, Priscilla. True to the black-and-white sci-fi reference, she is vague and disjointed in her description.

"It isn't alright, but it will be alright. Strike when he least expects it. You will die from a gunshot standing on a stage next to a man named Tom Morello while there is an awards ceremony. She will need your help when you meet her again."

She smirks as she relates that the two of us are the only men in attendance who are completely clean shaven of face and head. At the time I had a long goatee and hair to the middle of my back. This was long before it was almost obligatory for men to be bearded or even slightly unshaven in public.

It is completely possible that she had done some investigative work to bring this story to me. Unlikely, but within the realm of possibility. I wore a different Tool shirt four or five days a week. Her husband worked with computers at a government job with security clearance. While our cellphones didn't have internet access or touchscreens, it did exist, as did a Guitar World article that mentioned that the guitar player in Rage Against The Machine went to school with the one from Tool, Adam Jones.

These things are possible, but unlikely.

Afterwards, while she is returning her power object back to its customary home, I see a blurring - a distortion of reflection of her in the mirror on the other side of the bed. She notices, but doesn't say anything to me. Patty would recount this to me decades later over the phone during a fifteen hour long conversation across the country. She didn't like that I had apparently seen something she couldn't detect. Something that displeased me.

I interpret that the help she would need now would be a forced addiction to a large combination of prescription opioids and other pills. Thomas Wayne Randle idolizes Rush Limbaugh, to the point of aping his speech patterns and his sedentary, wasted, farcical lifestyle.

I am supposed to be shot by him as well, but not killed.

There is more to this story. I refuse to be the pawn in someone else's sick game.

Patty described what I would be wearing seven years ago. I now have those items. They are some of the only items I possess. She said we would meet at some kind of bus or train station. It would be cold.

The world has been a harsh, cold place since becoming a member of their family. Witches, indeed.